

other four units, all privately owned. The owners didn't have insurance so whatever was lost would be gone forever," he said.

"We fought the blaze for roughly two and a half hours. We didn't have fire hydrants or a local water supply. Our vehicles were the only water supply," he added. "One shop caught on fire and six, 55-gallon gasoline drums blew up. The fuel rained down all over everyone, and the mud walls of the buildings began collapsing. Fortunately, we had all backed up to a safe distance."

Although team members were helping the Afghans, sometimes their presence caused more problems than the fires they were fighting.

"There were always local residents and the media, like CNN, trying to get as close to the fires as possible. They were constantly in the way, trying to get a better view or film everything that was going on. However, after the explosions, we had no problems keeping everyone at a safe distance," said Sergeant Miller.

Crowd control played an important part in allowing the firefighters to do their job. "Security forces members earned a new level of respect from the firefighters," he said. "Many soldiers and locals walked around with AK-47 assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers — you never knew if a riot was going to break out. Security forces came out to all of the incidents and showed superior crowd control compared to the other responding forces."

It was a memorable first deployment for A1C Rick Mallow, a journeyman firefighter. "It was a great experience," he said. "We helped out a lot. Even so, it got pretty strenuous at times.

There were land mines going off everywhere. At night, we would watch the tracer fire and mortar explosions in the mountains surrounding the base."

"We received a call one night reporting a group from the international de-miners organization had gone out to a house to defuse a mine and it had detonated," said Sergeant Miller. "One person had been seriously injured. We responded to extinguish the house fire. An ambulance arrived to transport the injured man. As the ambulance drove away, it hit a tank mine and was blown to pieces. Four responders were killed and 16 were injured. We couldn't do anything but stand back for fear of secondary explosions."

Despite the difficult situations, the deployed Eielson firefighters did an outstanding job, said Eielson fire chief Jim Didier.

"These firefighters did the job they were trained to do in a difficult situation, and did it extremely well," he said. "Not only did they do the job, but they improved conditions for those firefighters who deployed next. It should make every person in the 354th Fighter Wing proud to serve with them."

Sergeant Miller is also proud of the firefighters he worked with during the deployment. "Everyone worked very hard in Afghanistan to do their part to accomplish the mission. We did our best with what tools and equipment we had available and came out on top. We didn't lose anyone in a fire or to senseless mistakes. We are well-trained and ready to face whatever comes our way." (*A1C Jasmine Campa 354th Fighter Wing Public Affairs*)

A Stealth Beddown

Team erects B-2 shelters at deployed location

Twenty members of the 49th Materiel Maintenance Squadron from Holloman Air Force Base, NM, spent more than 70 days at a deployed location late last year erecting portable shelters for B-2 Spirit bombers.

The Air Force now has two transportable B-2 Shelter Systems that allow the Stealth bombers to deploy overseas. Deploying the B-2s to forward locations significantly shortens combat missions, which have been as long as 44 hours from Whiteman AFB, MO, according to Lt Col Myron Majors, 49th MMS commander.

"This was the first time these shelters were constructed for operational use," he said. "We hand-picked a team with a core of troops who had experience in B2SS construction during the test and evaluation phase. Their experience, along with a lot of ingenuity and hard work, paid off as they finished the two shelters about three weeks ahead of the original schedule despite a number of modifications required in the field."

Each B2SS stretches almost a football field wide with an interior volume of 1.1 million cubic feet, providing the environment needed to maintain the stealth characteristics of the B-2 at a forward location. The Combat Support System Program Office at Eglin AFB, FL, manages the B2SS program, in



Members of the 49th MMS erected two portable shelters for B-2s at a deployed location. (Photos courtesy 49th MMS)

cooperation with the B-2 System Program Office at Tinker AFB, OK, and the Directorate of Requirements at Headquarters Air Combat Command, Langley AFB, VA. Each total shelter package costs about \$2.5 million and can be transported in 29 C-130 Hercules.

The soft-walled shelters, built by American Spaceframe Fabricators, Inc. of Crystal River, FL, can withstand extreme temperatures, snow and winds. They can also be equipped with a pressured liner to protect troops from biological and chemical